

# Raccoon in Newark Tests Positive For Rabies

DOVER (July 26, 2019) – Delaware's Division of Public Health (DPH) is advising Newark residents who live or spend time in the area of West Chestnut Hill Road near Rittenhouse Park of a positive case of rabies in a raccoon that came into contact with a human recently. The victim was bitten by the raccoon while getting into their vehicle. The raccoon was captured and brought to the DPH Lab, where test results on Wednesday, July 24, 2019, confirmed it had rabies. The individual has begun treatment for rabies exposure.

Anyone in this area who thinks they might have been bitten, scratched or come in contact with a raccoon should immediately contact their health care provider or call the DPH Rabies Program at 302-744-4995. An epidemiologist is available 24/7. Anyone who thinks their pet may have been bitten by the raccoon should call their private veterinarian or the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) at 302-698-4630 or email [rabies.hotline@delaware.gov](mailto:rabies.hotline@delaware.gov).

Since Jan. 1, 2019, the Division of Public Health (DPH) has performed rabies tests on 70 animals, four of which were confirmed to be rabid. All four positive cases involved raccoons (including this one). DPH only announces those rabies cases for which it is possible the animal had unknown contacts with additional humans or pets.

In 2018, DPH performed rabies tests on 146 animals, 19 of which were confirmed to be rabid, including six raccoons, five cats, one dog, five foxes, one horse, and one donkey. Additionally last year, DPH announced Delaware's first positive case of rabies in a human in nearly 80 years. A Felton woman died after contracting the disease.

Rabies is an infectious disease affecting the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Infection can occur through the bite or scratch of an infected animal or if saliva from such an animal gets into the eyes, nose, mouth or an opening in the skin. Rabies in humans and animals cannot be cured once symptoms appear, and therefore, if an animal that has exposed a human is unavailable to be quarantined or tested, DPH recommends that people receive post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment, a series of four vaccinations, as a precautionary measure.

Fortunately, rabies is also almost completely preventable. DPH recommends that members of the public take the following steps to stay clear of exposure:

- All dogs, cats, and ferrets 6 months of age and older are required by Delaware law to be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian.
- Consider vaccinating livestock and horses as well. It is recommended to consult with your private veterinarian if you have any questions regarding whether your animal(s) should be vaccinated against rabies.
- Pet owners can reduce the possibility of pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free.
- Spaying or neutering your pet may reduce the tendency to roam or fight and, thus, reduce the chance they will be exposed to rabies.
- Do not keep your pet's food or water outdoors; bowls can attract wild and stray animals.
- Keep your garbage securely covered.
- Do not touch or otherwise handle wild or unfamiliar animals, including cats and dogs, even if they appear friendly.

If You Encounter an Animal Behaving Aggressively:

- If you encounter a wild animal behaving aggressively, it is recommended you contact the DNREC's Wildlife Section at 302-739-9912 or 302-735-3600. Staff will determine whether it is more appropriate to refer callers to a private nuisance

wildlife control operator. A listing of nuisance wildlife control operators can be found at [WildLifeHelp.org](http://WildLifeHelp.org).

- If you encounter a stray or feral domestic animal behaving aggressively, contact the Office of Animal Welfare at 302-255-4646.
- Do not throw items at the animal or make loud banging noises, which may startle the animal and cause it to attack. Do nothing unless it is behaving unnaturally (aggressively or appears to be foaming at the mouth).

If You Encounter a Sick or Injured Wild Animal:

- To report a sick or hurt wild animal, Delaware residents are asked to contact the DNREC's Wildlife Section at 302-739-9912 or 302-735-3600. Staff will determine whether it is more appropriate to refer callers to a permitted volunteer wildlife rehabilitator.
- If you encounter a sick stray domestic animal (cat or dog) contact the Office of Animal Welfare at 302-255-4646.

For more information on the DPH rabies program, visit <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/rabies.html> or call 1-866-972-9705 or 302-744-4995. For more information on rabies, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices

with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.